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ABSTRACT

This study examined why high school students who had been enrolled in vocational classes at the Averill Career Opportunities Center (COC) in Saginaw, Michigan either did not enter or did not continue in classes there. COC staff identified 123 students who were originally scheduled to attend COC classes during fall 1990 but whose fall 1990 schedules did not contain COC courses. From these students, 75 were interviewed. The primary question asked of students was why they were once scheduled to attend COC classes but were no longer enrolled in those classes. Sixteen respondents reported that they needed additional classes for graduation; 11 reported a schedule conflict with either a job, a class, or extracurricular activities; 9 gave no reason; 8 reported needing some other classes but not for graduation; and 7 simply changed their minds. Secondary questions focused on the students' high school coursework and goals. The results revealed that most students intended to go to college and then begin a career. Most felt that their coursework was related to their goals and felt that they would be able to reach their goals. Based on these findings, several recommendations are made to school counselors who help students with class scheduling. The questionnaire is appended, and frequency of responses to individual questions is noted. (NB)

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EVALUATION REPORT

SURVEY OF FORMER COC ENROLLEES

1990-91

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SURVEY OF FORMER COC ENROLLEES

1990-91

An Approved Report of the
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INTRODUCTION

This report details the findings of structured interviews of high school students who had been enrolled in vocational classes at the Averill Career Opportunities Center (COC) but who subsequently did not enter (or stay in) classes there in the fall. The purpose of these interviews was to determine why the students were not enrolled.

An initial group of 123 students was identified by COC staff. These were students who were originally scheduled to attend COC classes during Fall, 1990 but whose final Fall, 1990 schedules did not contain COC courses.

From these students, 42 (34.1%) were not selected to be interviewed because of circumstances which occurred between the time the list was created and the time the interviews began. Specifically,

- 18 (14.6%) had left our District's K-12 system and
- 24 (19.5%) were attending classes at the COC.

This left 81 of 123 (65.8%) students to interview. Seventy-five (92.6%) were interviewed (one was absent due to an illness and five could not be located during the scheduled interview times).

The interviews were conducted with the cooperation of Arthur Hill, Saginaw High and COC staff. Two evaluators conducted one-to-one interviews with 75 Arthur Hill and Saginaw High students between October 23 - 25, 1990.

A blank copy of the structured interview form is in Appendix A. It should be noted that none of the multiple choice responses were read to the students.

FINDINGS

RESPONDENTS

As indicated earlier, 75 students were interviewed at Arthur Hill and Saginaw High between October 23-25, 1990.

Demographically, they can be described as follows:

- Thirty-one (41.3%) were male, 44 (58.7%) were female.
- Forty-four (58.7%) were Black, 21 (28.0%) were White, and 10 (13.3%) were Hispanic.
- One (1.3%) was 15 years old, 22 (29.3%) were 16, 43 (57.3%) were 17, eight (10.7%) were 18, and one (1.3%) was 19.
- Their grade point average (on a 4.0 scale) was 1.43 (C-) with a standard deviation of 0.65.

RESPONSES

Below are the main responses given by the students.

Primary Question. The primary question asked of students was **"Why, in their opinion, were they once scheduled to attend COC classes but were no longer enrolled in those classes."** The major responses are presented below, with the number of students giving each response in parentheses. (Students were allowed to give more than one response.)

- Needed some additional classes for graduation (16; 21.3%),
- Had a schedule conflict (11; 14.6%),
  - With a job (7 of 11),
  - With a class (3 of 11),
  - With extra curricular activities (1 of 11),
- Don't know why; I wanted to go; it just didn't show up on my schedule (9; 12.0%),*

---

*This response was given only by Saginaw High students.

- Need some classes but not for graduation (8; 10.7%), and
- Simply changed my mind about it (7; 9.3%).

Other answers, which were offered by three or less respondents, can be found in Appendix B under question 3.

Secondary Questions. Students were also asked about their best class at their home high school, their future goals, and whether their classes (and their attainment levels in those classes) were aiding them in reaching those goals. Their main answers are presented below. Interested readers can find more specific details in Appendix B.

- **Best Class**

  -Thirty-nine different courses were mentioned and only four of them were mentioned as "best" by four or more respondents. These classes were (with the number of respondents in parenthesis):

  -- Accounting (7),
  -- General Math (5),
  -- Economics (4), and
  -- Government (4).

  -Their reasons for naming that class were also varied. Thirty-two different responses were given and only five were given by more than two students. These reasons were:

  -- Like the topic/it's interesting (24),
  -- Fits with my career/future plans (10),
  -- Like the teacher's methods (5),
  -- Helps understand money (4), and
  -- Get good grades [in the class] (4).

- **Future Goals**

  -The majority of students (51; 68.0%) indicated they planned to attend a college or trade school after graduation. However, there was diversity in the fields they intended to pursue. Only four degree/career tracks were mentioned by more than three students. They were:

  -- Nursing (8),

-- Business (7),
-- Computer science (5),
-- Criminal Justice (4), and
-- Undecided (9).

-The next largest group (19; 25.3%) indicated they planned to go into military service.

-When asked what they planned to be doing in ten years, the majority (57; 76.0%) said they planned to be working (an additional four [5.3%] mentioned plans to be working and raising a family). Again, the types of careers mentioned were diverse, with only five being said by more than two people. These five are:

-- Business owner (8),
-- Nurse (5),
-- Computer programmer (5),
-- Attorney (4), and
-- Accountant (4).

- **Class Attainment Levels**

-Most (50; 66.7%) felt their high school classes were helping them to attain their goals, 18 (24.0%) indicated some classes were helpful, and 7 (9.3%) responded their classes were of no help.

-Lastly, when asked if they are achieving academically at levels which will allow them to reach their goals, most (55; 73.3%) answered yes, 11 (14.7%) were unsure, and 10 (13.3%) admitted they were not, and one (1.3%) considered achievement not relevant.

SUMMARY

Seventy-five Arthur Hill and Saginaw High students who had registered for, but who were not enrolled in, Fall, 1990 COC courses were interviewed. The interviews focused on why these students were no longer enrolled in COC courses and about their high school coursework and goals.

The major reasons why students were not attending COC included the following: needing additional classes (both in order to graduate and for career goals); scheduling conflicts; not knowing why the scheduling change was made, but still wanting to go (Saginaw High only); and changing their mind. It does not appear that the two most frequently cited reasons for not going to COC (needing more classes for graduation and scheduling conflicts - 27 incidents or 36.0%) represents a wholesale manipulation, for expedience, on the part of counselors.

It was also learned that most students intend to go to college and then begin a career. Most feel that their coursework is related to their goals and feel they are attaining at sufficient levels to reach their goals.

Last, as might be expected, they exhibited diversity in their college/career plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the findings in this report, the following recommendations are offered:

- Many of the students withdrew from COC classes in order to take classes they either needed or wanted. Counselors should review the transcripts of students considering COC classes to determine if there are classes these students need which would be offered only at times in conflict with attending COC. They should avoid enrolling students who would need to withdraw for required classes.

- Since some students change their minds about attending COC, they may not have a clear picture of how COC classes fit in with their future goals (if they have any). High school counselors should review the goals of students who are considering the COC and explain to students how COC classes will or will not fit with those goals.

- In a similar vein, junior high counselors should review high school requirements with their students. As well, these students should become familiar with what coursework they will need to complete for whatever future goals they may have (college or vocational).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE OF FORMER COC STUDENTS

Part I

Directions: Prior to the interview, supply the following information about the student from the background data provided.

Name: _____

ID Number: _____

Birthdate: _____/_____/_____

G.P.A.: _____

Gender: M F

Racial/Ethnic: AI W H B O

Years In School: 10 11 12

Part II

Directions: Read the introduction to the students and ask them the following questions. Only read the questions; do not read the response options, just indicate which one the student provided.

Introduction: **Hello, I am _____ from the Evaluation Department. Lately, we've been talking with some students about the classes they've been taking and their future plans. And I want to assure you that what you tell me will be kept confidential.**

1. **What grade are you in?** _____

2. **Of the classes you're in right now, which one do you think is the best, and why?**

   Class: _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. School records indicate that you signed-up to take classes at the COC. But you're not taking any classes there now. Is that true? _____

If No, why do you think you were originally scheduled there?
If Yes, why?
(Recall, do not read the response options. Check the answers below which reflect the student's responses and, where appropriate, read the additional prompt and record that answer.)

_____ A. [Circle] Teacher Friend Counselor Parent(s) talked me out of it.

(Why?) _____

_____ B. I need some additional classes at (Arthur Hill/Saginaw High).

(Which ones?) _____

_____ C. Schedule conflict with (Circle)
Course Extracurricular Activities School Activities Job

(Which ones?) _____

_____ D. None of my friends are attending COC.

_____ E. It was because the strike delayed the start of school here and I figured I'd be too far behind the others.

_____ F. I changed my mind, but I couldn't get in to see the counselor before they did the final schedules.

_____ G. I didn't really mean to sign up for it.

_____ H. Attending COC interfered with my plans to go to college. (Why?)

_____

_____ I. I simply changed my mind about it.

_____ J. I have no idea why I was signed-up.

_____ K. I tried COC but didn't like it there. (Why?)

_____

_____ L. I didn't like riding the bus each day.

_____ M. I didn't like a specific teacher or staff member.

_____ N. I didn't seem to fit in with the students there.

_____ O. There were transportation problems.

_____ P. Other (Specify): _____

4. What do you plan to do after graduation?

_____ A. I plan to attend **college** or a training school.
If so, what type of degree or career would you like?

_____

_____ B. I plan to get a **job.**
If so, what type of job would you like?

_____

_____ C. I plan to get **married**/raise a **family.**

_____ D. I plan to go into the **military.**

_____ E. I have **no plans.**

_____ F. Other (Specify): _____

_____

5. What would you like to be doing in ten years?

_____ A. I plan to be **working.**
(Specify type of job or profession)

_____

_____ B. I plan to be **married**/raising a **family.**

_____ C. I plan to be **both working and married**/raising a family.
(Specify type of job or profession)

_____

_____ D. I plan to stay in the **military.**
If so, what do you see yourself doing in the military?

_____

_____ E. I plan to stay in the **military and be married**/raising a family.
If so, what do you see yourself doing in the military?

_____

_____ F. I **never thought about it.**

_____ G. Other (Specify): _____

_____

6. **Do you think your high school classes will help you in reaching these future goals?**

_____ **Yes**

_____ **Some Will**

_____ **No**

(Please explain:) _____

_____

_____

_____

7. **In the classes you are taking, are you achieving at levels that will allow you to reach your goals?**

_____ **Yes**

_____ **No**

_____ **Unsure**

(Please explain:) _____

_____

Thank you very much for your time and for talking with me.

APPENDIX B

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE OF FORMER COC STUDENTS
(N=75)

Part I

Years Old:	Age	N	%
	15	1	1.3%
	16	22	29.3%
	17	43	57.3%
	18	8	10.7%
	19	1	1.3%
		75	99.9% (Rounding Error)

G.P.A.: $\bar{X}$ = 1.43 S.D. = 0.65

Gender: M (31; 41.3%) F (44; 58.7%)

Racial/Ethnic:	Classification	N	%
	American Indian	0	0.0%
	White	21	28.0%
	Hispanic	10	13.3%
	Black	44	58.7%
	Oriental	0	0.0%
		75	100.0%

Years In School:	Grade	N	%
	10	1	1.3%
	11	37	49.3%
	12	37	49.3%
		75	99.9% (Rounding Error)

Part II

1. What grade are you in?

N	%	Grade Mentioned
0	0.0	10
36	48.0	11
39	52.0	12

2. Of the classes you're in right now, which one do you think is the best?

Class	(Number of Respondents in Parentheses)
Accounting	(7)
Math (General)	(5)
Economics	(4)
Government	(4)
Algebra I	(3)
Trigonometry	(3)
Sociology	(3)
Chemistry	(3)
World Literature	(3)
Applied Economics	(3)
Consumer Economics	(3)
Algebra II	(2)
Woodshop	(2)
Typing	(2)
Yearbook	(2)
Business Law	(2)
Geometry	(2)
Biology (General)	(2)
Pre-Algebra	(2)

The following classes were each offered by one respondent: literature and composition, studio craft, parent/child development, public speaking, newspaper, business computers, family living, drafting, psychology, choir, band, English, human physiology, computer (general), American literature, geography, earth science, art, geometry, and none.

and why?

Reason	
I like the topic/it's interesting	(24)
It fits with my career/future plans	(10)
I like the teacher's methods	(5)
It helps me understand about money	(4)
I get good grades	(4)
It's my best area	(2)
It's important to me	(2)
I like math/working with numbers	(2)
I need to graduate	(2)
No particular reason	(2)
I enjoy reading and writing	(2)
I learn about business	(2)
It's a fun class	(2)

2. (Continued)

The following reasons were each offered by one respondent: I like the labs; I like music; I like the people in the class; it's challenging; independent, collaborative work; learn to do different things with wood; we can do what we want in class; course material is easy to understand; all classes are hard; learn a lot of different things; exposure to key community members; it's my easiest course; my thinking skills are used; I get to make projects; it's the best thing for me; I can learn about the earth; I like reading stories; it allows me self-expression, and I learn the skills.

3. **School records indicate that you signed-up to take classes at the COC. But you're not taking any classes there now. Is that true?** _____

If No, why do you think you were originally scheduled there?
If Yes, why?

N	%		
1	1.3	A.	**Teacher Friend Counselor Parent(s)** talked me out of it.

Source	
Teacher	(1)
Friend	(0)
Counselor	(0)
Parents	(0)

		B.	I need some **additional classes** at (Arthur Hill/Saginaw High).
16	21.3		(For graduation)
8	10.7		(Not for graduation)

Which ones? The classes mentioned were: accounting, chemistry, trigonometry, physical education, general math, computers, biology, general science, economics, government, Latin, history, English, health, geometry studio arts, social studies, and literature.

11	14.6	C.	**Schedule conflict** (more than one source allowed).

Which ones?

Source	
Courses	(3)
Extracurricular Activities	(1)
School Activities	(2)
Jobs	(7)

1	1.3	E.	It was because the **strike delayed the start of school** here and I figured I'd be too far behind the others.
7	9.3	I.	I simply **changed my mind** about it.
2	2.7	J.	I have **no idea** why I was signed-up.
2	2.7	K.	I tried COC but **didn't like** it there. (**Why?**)

Reason	
Just didn't like it/no real reason	(1)
Teacher yelled	(1)

3. (Continued)

N	%		
27	36.0	P.	Other (Specify):

Reason	
I don't know why; I wanted to go; It just didn't show up on my schedule	(9)
I changed my career goals	(3)
To stay full time to improve my grades	(2)
I never signed up	(2)

The following reasons were each given by one respondent: I was getting behind in my classes; I just wanted to say at SHS; COC class started too early; medical reasons; the COC class I wanted was full; the COC teacher yelled; the COC teacher was boring; no one told me I could go; I didn't like going back and forth; I wasn't given the COC class I wanted; I decided that COC wasn't for me; I didn't know what was available; I wanted to take all my classes at AHHS, and COC was my second choice, and my first choice (Yearbook) was more important.

4. What do you plan to do after graduation?

N	%		
51	68.0	A.	I plan to attend **college** or a training school. If so, what type of degree or career would you like?

Degree or Training Areas	
Nursing	(8)
Business	(7)
Computer Science	(5)
Criminal Justice	(4)
Law	(3)
Journalism/Broadcasting	(3)
Pre-Medicine	(2)
Undecided	(9)

The following were each offered by a single respondent: child care, pharmacy, psychology, teaching, commercial arts, skilled trades, fashion design, cosmetology, drama; sociology, engineering, accounting, and electricity.

1	1.3	B.	I plan to get a **job.** If so, what type of job would you like?

Career	
Cosmetologist	(1)

4. (Continued)

N	%		
19	25.3	D.	I plan to go into the **military.**
3	4.0	E.	I have **no plans.**
1	1.3	F.	Other (Specify):

Response
One year off, after that unsure (1)

5. **What would you like to be doing in ten years?**

N	%		
57	72.0	A.	I plan to be **working.** (Specify type of job or profession)

Professions

Business Owner	(8)
Nurse	(5)
Computer Programmer	(5)
Attorney	(4)
Accountant	(4)
Construction Worker	(2)
Physician	(2)
Pharmacist	(2)
Cosmetologist	(2)
Law Enforcement Officer	(2)
Good Paying Job (Unspecified)	(2)
Unsure	(8)

The following professions were each given by one respondent: actor, paralegal, foreman, news anchor, electrician, florist, restauranteur/head chef, photographer, fashion designer, journalist, day care center operator, commercial artist, teacher, professional basketball player, and design and layout specialist. (Some students offered more than one response.)

4	5.3	C.	I plan to be **both working and married**/raising a family. (Specify type of job or profession - See previous listing)
7	9.3	D.	I plan to stay in the **military.** If so, what do you see yourself doing in the military?

Professions

The following were each given by a single respondent: computer programmer, military police officer, nurse, beautician, and intelligence officer.

5. (Continued)

N	%		
3	4.0	F.	I **never thought about it.**
7	9.3	G.	Other (Specify):

Response	
Go to school and work	(1)
Have money; vacation in Jamaica	(1)
Not sure	(5)

6. **Do you think your high school classes will help you in reaching these future goals?**

N	%	
50	66.7	**Yes**
18	24.0	**Some Will**
6	8.0	**No**
1	1.3	**Not Relevant**

(Please explain:)

Comments	
Those which are related to my career goals	(20)
Some classes are not at all related to my goals	(7)
Some specific courses	(6)
Those which I need for college	(2)

The following comments were each offered by a single respondent: definitely, but I still need college courses to get to my goal, classes give me basic knowledge about people, no real reason, and the classes at COC did.

7. **In the classes you are taking, are you achieving at levels that will allow you to reach your goals?**

N	%	
55	73.3	**Yes**
10	13.3	**No**
9	12.0	**Unsure**
1	1.3	**Not Relevant**

(Please explain:)

Comments	
My grades are good	(9)
My grades are okay, could be better	(5)
I could do better, I need to put in more effort	(4)

7. (Continued)

I lack motivation	(2)
In some classes, not all	(2)

The following comments were each given from a single respondent: classes are hard, some subjects I don't understand, I'm trying, I was suspended, my grades are lower than I want, I can't seem to do well on tests, classes provide good practice, I am challenged, I'm starting to buckle down more, and I am in most classes.

END

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